

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ATHENS 06963 01 OF 02 261649Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /066 W
-----083364 262131Z /63

R 261441Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1767
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 6963

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, GR
SUBJ: ELECTORAL FEBER - HIGH TEMPERATURES IN CERTAIN CIRCLES

REF: ATHENS 5996

1. ELECTORAL FEVER IS ENDEMIC TO GREECE, WITH ITS INTENSITY USUALLY DEPENDING UPON THE PARTICULAR EVENTS OF THE MOMENT. THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, EVEN THE NORMAL POLITICAL DOLDRUMS OF SUMMER HAVE FAILED TO SUBDUCE THE EXCITEMENT IN CERTAIN CIRCLES WHICH ANTICIPATE THAT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WILL BE CALLED AS EARLY AS THIS FALL. AT THE PASOK CONGRESS EARLIER THIS MONTH, ANDREAS PAPANDREOU LOUDLY WARNED THE PARTY FAITHFUL TO BE PREPARED FOR ELECTIONS BEFORE THE END OF 1977. GEORGE MAVROS, LEADER OF THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PARTY, THE UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER (UDC), ALSO RECENTLY SUGGESTED--ALBEIT SOMEWHAT LESS CATEGORICALLY THAN PAPANDREOU--THAT NATIONAL ELECTIONS MIGHT TAKE PLACE PRIOR TO THE END OF THE YEAR. AND WE HAVE EVEN HAD AN IVP DROPOUT--A UDC GRANTEE WHO TOLD US HE COULD NOT TRAVEL TO THE US THIS YEAR BECAUSE ELECTIONS ARE IMMINENT.

2. CONSTITUTIONALLY, PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS MUST BE HELD WITHIN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ATHENS 06963 01 OF 02 261649Z

FOUR YEARS AND THIRTY DAYS FROM THE TIME OF THE LAST GENERAL ELECTIONS (NOVEMBER 17, 1974); THUS PRIOR TO DECEMBER 17, 1978. HOWEVER, THE PRIME MINISTER CAN DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT AT HIS DISCRETION AND CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS. DURING MUCH OF THIS CENTURY, THOSE IN POWER NEARLY ALWAYS HAVE SOUGHT TO GO TO THE POLLS EARLY--CHOOSING A TIME MORE SUITABLE TO THEM IN ORDER TO EXPLOIT A FAVORABLE CLIMATE AND TO AVOID SURRENDERING THE OPTION OF SURPRISE

BY FACING A CONSTITUTIONALLY IMPOSED DEADLINE. TRADITIONALLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN GREECE OCCUR SOMETIME IN THE SPRING OR THE FALL--VERY, VERY RARELY IN THE COLD OF WINTER OR THE HEAT OF SUMMER.

3. IT WOULD SEEM THAT OPPOSITION LEADERS CONTINUE TO RAISE THE SPECTOR OF ELECTIONS FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES, PRIMARILY TO KEEP SOME FORM OF UNITY AMONG THEIR FOLLOWERS. FOR EXAMPLE PASOK HAS CONTINUING PARTY ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS WITH PAPANDREOU'S DOMINEERING PERSONALITY CREATING ILL-WILL AMONG SOME OF HIS ADHERENTS. AND IN CONTRAST, THE LACK-LUSTER MAVROS FACES IN THE UDC UNHAPPINESS WITH HIS LEADERSHIP. AS FOR THE SMALLER POLITICAL GROUPINGS, THEY FIND IT CONVENIENT TO SPEAK IN GENERAL TERMS OF THE NEED FOR "COOPERATION AMONG THE OPPOSITION" BECAUSE ELECTIONS ARE COMING SOON, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT WITHOUT SUCH COOPERATION THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO FARE WELL UNDER THE REINFORCED PROPORTIONAL ELECTORAL SYSTEM WHICH WILL GOVERN THE NEXT ELECTIONS. THUS, THE THREAT OF EARLY ELECTIONS IS A USEFUL TOOL FOR THOSE IN THE OPPOSITION.

4. BUT IF OTHERS SOUND THE ELECTORAL ALARM, IT SEEMS PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS IS NOT QUITE SO EAGER. TRUE, THE OPPOSITION IS CURRENTLY IN CONSIDERABLE DISARRAY, BUT BARRING SOME UNFORESEEN SPECTACULAR DEVELOPMENT, IT IS NOT LIKELY TO MUSTER MORE OF A CHALLENGE IN THE COMING YEAR OR SO. WE FIND MOST--ALTHOUGH ADMITTEDLY NOT ALL--OF THE GOVERNING NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY DEPUTIES RATHER TRANQUIL--LOOK-TOWARDS 1978 RATHER THAN THE CURRENT YEAR. THEY POINT OUT COR-

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ATHENS 06963 01 OF 02 261649Z

RECTLY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HOLDS MOST OF THE CARDS. HE HAS A RECENTLY ADOPTED ELECTORAL LAW WHICH IS TO HIS LIKING AND WHICH, IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, WILL PROVIDE HIM WITH A COMFORTABLE MAJORITY IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT--EVEN THOUGH THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY (ND) MIGHT NOT EQUAL THE 54 PERCENT IT RECEIVED IN 1974 (THEREBY CONTROLLING AT PRESENT 215 OF 300 SEATS IN PARLIAMENT). INDEED, EVEN IF THE ND SHOULD DROP AS LOW AS 45 PERCENT, IT MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE PARLIAMENT, WHILE BOLSTERING THE STRENGTH OF THE LEADING OPPOSITION PARTY THROUGH THE "PLUS ONE" AMENDMENT TO THE ELECTORAL LAW (REFTEL), A DEVELOPMENT SAID TO BE IN LINE WITH CARAMANLIS' OBJECTIVE OF STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRONG OPPOSITION PARTY.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ATHENS 06963 02 OF 02 262113Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /066 W
-----086375 262129Z /63

R 261441Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ATHENS 6963

5. BUT THE PRIME MINISTER'S TRUMP IS UNDOUBTEDLY THAT HE CAN CALL THE ELECTIONS WHEN HE PREFERENCES. NOT A FEW BELIEVE THAT CARAMANLIS IS AWAITING THE FINAL STAGES OF THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR GREEK ENTRY INTO THE EC BEFORE CALLING ELECTIONS, AND WILL CAMPAIGN SUCCESSFULLY ON THAT VERY POPULAR ISSUE. SOME ARE EVEN OPTIMISTIC THAT THE EC NEGOTIATIONS WILL HAVE PROGRESSED SUFFICIENTLY SO THAT THE ELECTIONS CAN COME AS SOON AS NEXT SPRING--NOTING AS A COROLLARY THAT CARAMANLIS MIGHT WELL WISH TO HAVE HIS OWN ELECTIONS BEFORE FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING, HIS OSTENSIBLE CLOSE FRIEND AND SUPPORTER, MEETS AN UNCERTAIN FATE IN THE MARCH 1978 FRENCH ELECTIONS.

6. IN SPITE OF ALL THE PREDICTIONS, HOWEVER, THE GOG HAS REPEATEDLY ATTEMPTED TO KNOCK DOWN ALL RUMORS BY STATING OUTRIGHT THAT THE CARAMANLIS ADMINISTRATION WILL COMPLETE ITS FULL FOUR-YEAR TERM. THE RATIONALE HERE IS THAT THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF NATION-BUILDING STILL TO DO AND THAT EARLY ELECTIONS WOULD BE UNNECESSARILY DISRUPTIVE TO THE PROCESS. EMPHASIZING THIS POINT, A DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE, HIMSELF A HIGHLY SKILLFUL AND ARTICULATE PARLIAMENTARIAN, TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT ELECTIONS WOULD MOST LIKELY BE HELD IN THE FALL OF 1978. REFERRING TO RECENT STRINGENT ECONOMIC MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOG (LUXURY TAX INCREASES, CREDIT RESTRICTED),

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ATHENS 06963 02 OF 02 262113Z

TIONS, ETC.), HE SAID THE PEOPLE ARE GOING TO FEEL THE CONSEQUENCES AND WOULD REACT CRITICALLY. BUT "WE WILL TURN ON THE FAUCETS IN AMPLE TIME," HE SMILED, "TO GUARANTEE AN IMPROVED CLIMATE FOR THE ELECTIONS WHEN THEY COME."

7. ONE OTHER RELATED CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE IS WHETHER OR NOT CARAMANLIS WILL SEEK THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC BEFORE CONVOKING THE NEXT ELECTIONS. ONE COMMON ARGUMENT IS THAT HE WILL EMPLOY HIS OWN PRESTIGE TO ENHANCE THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY'S CHANCES AT THE

POLLS, AND AFTERWARDS GO ON TO THE PRESIDENCY. THE CONTRARY ARGUMENT IS THAT IT WILL BE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE NEW DEMOCRACY TO DUPLICATE THE 54 PERCENT OF 1974, AND CARAMANLIS, A PROUD MAN, DOES NOT WISH TO FACE THE EMBARRASSMENT OF A LOSS OF ELECTORAL SUPPORT; THUS HE WILL MOVE TO THE PRESIDENCY BEFORE THE ELECTIONS. PROBABLY AT THIS POINT, NO ONE REALLY KNOWS THE CRAFTY STATESMAN'S INTENTIONS. BUT IN OUR OPINION, WHETHER CONSTANTINE CARAMANLIS REMAINS AS PRIME MINISTER OR CHOOSES TO ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY, HIS PERSONAL PRESTIGE AND HIS OWN POLITICAL STANDING ARE SUFFICIENT THAT HE COULD STILL IMPOSE HIS AUTHORITY FROM WHICHEVER PERCH (ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENCY, ADMITTEDLY, WOULD REQUIRE SOME CONSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENTS). AS TO WHEN WE MIGHT FACE AN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN, THE FALL OF 1977 IS POSSIBL BUT THE PROBABILITY AT THIS POINT IS LOW, AND WHILE MAY 1978 IS FAVORED BY THE COFFEE HOUSE EXPERTS, OUR PRESENT READING IS THAT THE BEST LIKELIHOOD IS FOR THE FALL OF 1978.

MILLS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTIONS, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 26-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ATHENS06963
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770266-1139
Format: TEL
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770720/aaaaarbz.tel
Line Count: 187
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 48030e64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ATHENS 5996
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1753987
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTORAL FEBER - HIGH TEMPERATURES IN CERTAIN CIRCLES
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, GR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/48030e64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009